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# The Bridge of Fire

By James Flecker



LONDON ELGIN MATHEWS, VIGO STREET, Printed by Geo. Gifford

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# THE BRIDGE OF FIRE



# THE BRIDGE OF FIRE

POEMS

BY

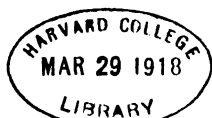
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LONDON

ELKIN MATHEWS, VIGO STREET

1907

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*Shapleigh fund*

TO  
JACK BEAZLEY

*Postus tenero, mee sodali*

---

GENTLE Poet, only friend,  
Lover of the stars and sun,  
Since our days are at an end,  
Since the older days are done ;  
Since it seems that nevermore  
May I hope to trail my gown  
Rapturously, as before,  
With my friend in Oxford Town ;  
Since I so regret a time  
So unprofitably spent,  
Let me send a little rhyme  
From a king in banishment,—  
Send a wish that we may see  
Better days, and braver days :—  
*Floreas, amice mi !*  
*Floreas Praxiteles.*



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# I

## A New Year's Carol

AWAKE, awake ! The world is young,  
For all its weary years of thought :  
The starkest fights must still be fought,  
The most surprising songs be sung.

And those who have no other Gods  
May still behold, if they bestir,  
The windy amphitheatre  
Where dawn the timeless periods.

Then hear the shouting-voice of men  
Magniloquently rise and ring :  
Their flashing eyes and measured swing  
Prove that the world is young again.

I was beyond the hills, and heard  
That old and fervent Goddess call,  
Whose voice is like a waterfall,  
And sweeter than the singing-bird.

O stubborn arms of rosy youth,  
Break down your other Gods, and turn  
To where her dauntless eyeballs burn,—  
The silent pools of Light and Truth.

## II

### Rioupéroux

**HIGH** and solemn mountains guard Rioupéroux,—

**Small** untidy village where the river drives a mill :

**Frail** as wood-anemones, white and frail were you,

**And** drooping a little like the slender daffodil.

**Oh** I will go to France again, and tramp the valley through,

**And** I will change these gentle clothes for clog and corduroy,

**And** work with the mill-hands of black Rioupéroux,

**And** walk with you and talk with you like any other boy.

### III

## The Ballad of the Student in the South

It was no sooner than this morn  
That first I found you there,  
Up to your breast in Southern corn  
As golden as your hair.

I had read books you had not read,  
Yet was I put to shame  
To hear the simple words you said,  
That shuddered like a flame.

Shall I forget, when prying dawn  
Sends me about my way,  
The careless stars, the quiet lawn,  
And you with whom I lay ?

Darling, a Scholar's fancies sink  
All faint beneath your song :  
And you are right : why should we think,  
We who are young and strong ?

We're of the people, you and I,  
We do what others do,  
Linger and toil, and laugh and die,  
And love the whole night through.

## IV

### Mignon

Knowst thou the land where bloom the Lemon-  
trees,

And darkly gleam the golden oranges ?  
A gentle wind blows down from that blue sky ;  
Calm stands the Myrtle and the Laurel high.  
Hast thou been there ? Away, away !  
O Father, let us seek that land some day.

Knowst thou the House, that gloriously glows  
With shining rooms and pillared porticoes.  
The marble statues stand and look at me :  
Alas, poor child, what hath been done to thee ?  
Hast thou been there ? Away, away !  
Together let us go, brave friend, some day !

Knowst thou the Mountain with its crown of cloud ?  
The mule plods warily ; the white mists shroud ;  
Coiled in their caves the ancient Dragons dream :  
Down leaps the rock, and over it the stream.  
Hast thou been there ? Away, away !  
There lies our path. O Father, come to-day !

(From Goethe.)

V

Dorothy

DOROTHY, open your sweet eyes,  
Give me your mouth to kiss :  
Tell me how women get so wise,  
And what their secret is.

Yours is the beauty of the moon,  
The wisdom of the sea,  
Since first you tasted, sweet and soon,  
Of God's forbidden tree.

## VI

### From Grenoble

Now have I seen, in Graisivaudan's vale,  
The fruits that dangle and the vines that trail,  
The poplars standing up in bright blue air,  
The silver turmoil of the broad Isère  
And sheer pale cliffs that wait through Earth's  
    long noon  
Till the round Sun be colder than the Moon.

Mine be the ancient song of Travellers :  
I hate this glittering land where nothing stirs :  
I would go back, for I would see again  
Mountains less vast, a less abundant plain,  
The Northern Cliffs clean-swept with driven  
    foam,  
And the rose-garden of my gracious home.

## VII

### Hialmar speaks to the Raven

NIGHT on the bloodstained snow: the wind is  
chill;

And there a thousand tombless warriors lie,  
Grasping their swords, wild-featured: all are  
still:

Above them the black ravens wheel and cry.

A brilliant moon sends her cold light abroad:  
Hialmar arises from the reddened slain,  
Leaning heavily on his shattered sword,  
And bleeding from his side the battle-rain.

“Hail to you all: is there one breath still drawn  
Among those fierce and fearless lads that played  
So merrily, and sang as sweet in the dawn  
As thrushes singing in the bramble shade?”

## HIALMAR SPEAKS TO THE RAVEN

“They have no word to say: my helm’s unbound,  
My breastplate by the axe unriveted :  
Blood’s on my eyes ; I hear a spreading sound  
Like waves or wolves that clamour in my head.

“Eater of men, old raven, come this way,  
And with thine iron bill open my breast :  
To-morrow find us as we are to-day,  
And bear my heart to her that I love best.

“Through Upsála, where drink the Jarls and  
sing,  
And clash their golden bowls in company,  
Bird of the moor, carry with tireless wing  
To Ylmer’s daughter there the heart of me.

“And thou shalt see her standing, straight and  
pale,  
High-pedestalled on some rook-haunted tower :  
She has two earrings wrought of silver scale,  
And eyes like stars that shine in twilight hour.

## HIALMAR SPEAKS TO THE RAVEN

"Tell her my love, thou dark bird ominous;  
Give her my heart, no bloodless heart and vile,  
But red, compact and strong, O raven. Thus  
Shall Ylmer's daughter greet thee with a smile.

"Now let my life from twenty deep wounds flow,  
And wolves may drink the blood. My time is  
done.

Young, brave and spotless, laughing-free I go  
To sit where all the Gods are, in the sun."

"Le coeur de Hialmar" Leconte de Lisle.

## VIII

We that were friends to-night have found  
A sudden fear, a secret flame:  
I am on fire with the soft sound  
You make, in uttering my name.

Forgive a young and boastful man  
Whom dreams delight and passions please,  
And love me as great women can,  
Who have no children at their knees.

IX

Pervigilium

REIGN, thou marble Venus, reign !  
We are tired of painted Marys.  
Thou shalt stir thyself again,  
And be queen of our vagaries.  
Men no more shall worship pain  
When they taste how brave the air is,  
When they herald thee with laughter, and with  
roses entertain.

When thy lilies bloom once more,  
When thy bosomed rosebuds waken,  
Love shall be our only lore,  
Cares and creeds be all forsaken ;  
And we'll wander by the shore,  
Up among the forest bracken,  
Decked with leaf and crowned with branches,—  
children as we were before.

## PERVIGILIUM

When the world returns to Spring,  
In the commonwealth of races  
Every Poet shall be King  
With a court of happy faces :  
Maidens in a rosy ring  
Shall be lavish of embraces ;  
Every night shall throb with music : all the  
reeling world shall sing.

I must dream no more to-day :  
Children, home ! we cannot sever  
Pain and Grief and Death whose sway  
Stands unalterable ever.  
Though you roam the woods alway,  
Vain is love, and vain endeavour.  
Sorrow breathes among the woodland ; whispers  
break upon our play.

## X

I HAVE sung all Love's great songs,  
And have no new song to sing,  
But I'll sing the old songs again,  
With their burden of rights and wrongs,  
And conventional sad refrain,—  
O, sweet Love's home-coming !

I will praise the arms of my Love,  
And her tender body's swing,  
And her eyes, and her lips and breath :  
I will call to the powers above,  
And to tunnelling powers beneath,—  
O sweet Love's home-coming !

Thus did we, and always will,  
While centuries crowd on the wing,  
And drive us along to our doom,  
When the globes shall be ground in the Mill  
And lovers shall leap from the tomb,—  
O, sweet Love's home-coming !

## XI

### On Turner's Polyphemus

PAINTER of day, let my dark spirit fly  
Past the Trinacrian Sound, to gaze upon  
The deathless horses of Hyperion  
Driven up fiery stairs tumultuously :  
To see once more the Achaian prow glide by,  
Odysseus in his burnished galleon,  
Nereides that sing him swiftly on,  
And baffled Cyclops fading in the sky.

Master, you paint the passion of the Earth,  
The faint victorious music of her birth,  
The splendour of things lost and things grown  
old ;  
And show us song new-wrought with ardent  
might  
Of strong-winged morning and of sure delight,  
Of hyacinthine mist, and shining gold.

## XII

### To Francis Thompson

With a grey rush of tremulous angel-wings  
And pealings of the white-robed orchestra  
Wherein ethereal souls were playing a  
Concerto of divine imaginings :  
With freshness born anew from old-time Springs,  
With Summer's flash and Winter's purity,  
With Autumn's gentleness he came to me,  
And whispered words of visionary things.  
Till shafts of dim desire pierced me through,  
Till shadows came and went before my eyes,  
And my raised glance beheld in deep review  
The legionary splendour of the skies.  
Which vision past, singing I went my way  
And tread the dusty roads of Earth to-day.

### XIII

## The Ballad of Hampstead Heath

FROM Heaven's gate to Hampstead Heath

Young Bacchus and his crew

Came tumbling down, and o'er the town

Their bursting trumpets blew.

The silver night was wildly bright,

And madly shone the moon,

To hear a song so clear and strong,

With such a lovely tune.

From London's houses, huts, and flats

Came busmen, snobs, and Earls,

And ugly men in bowler hats

With charming little girls.

Sir Moses came, with eyes of flame,

Judd, who is like a bloater,

The brave Lord Mayor, in coach and pair,

King Edward, in his motor.

Far in a rosy mist withdrawn

The God, and all his crew,

Silenus pulled by nymphs, a faun,

A satyr drenched in dew,

## THE BALLAD OF HAMPSTEAD HEATH

Smiled as they wept those shining tears

Only Immortals know,

Whose feet are set among the stars,

Above the shifting snow.

And one spake out into the night

Before they left for ever,

"Rejoice, rejoice!" and his great voice

Rolled like a splendid river.

He spoke in Greek, which Britons speak

Seldom, and circumspectly ;

But Mr. Judd, that man of mud,

Translated it correctly.

And when they heard that happy word

Policemen leapt and ambled :

The busmen pranced, the maidens danced,

The men in bowlers gambolled.

An Echo walked the town till late,

And found the long streets lonely :

At last she found a small brass plate

Inscribed FOR MEMBERS ONLY.

And so she went to Parliament ;

But those ungainly men

Woke up from sleep, and turned about,

And fell asleep again.

## XIV

### Ideal

WHEN all my gentle friends had gone  
I wandered in the night alone :  
Beneath the green electric glare  
I saw men pass with hearts of stone ;  
Yet still I heard them everywhere,  
The golden voices of the air :  
“ Friend, we will go to hell with thee,  
Thy griefs, thy glories we will share,  
And rule the land and shake the sea  
And set a thousand devils free :—”  
“ What dost thou, Stranger, at my side,  
Thou gaunt old man accosting me ?  
Away, this is my night of pride !  
On Satan's horses I will ride,  
And I will seek delightful things.”  
The old man answered : “ Woe betide ! ”

## IDEAL

Said I, "The world is made for Kings :  
To him who works and working sings  
Come joy and majesty and power  
And steadfast love with royal wings."  
"O watch these fools that blink and cower,"  
Said that wise man : "and every hour  
A score is born, a dozen dies."  
Said I : "In London fades the flower  
But far away the bright blue skies  
Shall watch my solemn walls arise,  
And all the glory, all the grace  
Of earth shall gather there, and eyes  
Will shine like stars in that new place."  
Said he : "Indeed of ancient race  
Thou comest, with thy hollow scheme :  
And quiet tears of men shall stream  
For thee, O Architect of Dream,  
Where are the islands of the blest ?  
And where Atlantis, where Theleme ?"

XV

Arthur Rackham's Rip Van  
Winkle

SINCE youth is wise, and cannot comprehend  
Proportion, nor behold things as they are,  
*Φιλοθέαμονες* we'll be, my friend,  
And laugh at what appears quadrangular,  
Our only Gods shall be the Subterrane,  
Pictures of things misshapen, harsh and crude,  
The flattened Face outside the window-pane,  
The little Squeak behind us in the wood.  
Here, friend, are subtly drawn uncommon  
things:  
Make such your Gods: they only understand.  
Only a Headless Wag with slimy wings  
Can stop your toothache and the Dentist's hand.  
Though after twenty years they may not please,  
Sane men have worshipped stranger Gods than  
these.

## XVI

### Mary Magdalen

O eyes that strip the souls of men !  
There came to me the Magdalen.  
Her blue robe with a cord was bound,  
Her hair with Lenten lilies crowned.  
“ Arise,” she said, “ God calls for thee :  
Turned to new paths thy feet must be.  
Leave the fever and the feast,  
Leave the friends thou lovest best.  
For thou must walk in barefoot ways  
To give my dear Lord Jesus praise.”

Then answered I—“ Sweet Magdalen,  
God’s servant, once beloved of men,  
Why didst thou change old ways for new,  
Thy trailing red for corded blue,  
Roses for lilies on thy brow,  
Rich splendour for a barren vow ? ”

## MARY MAGDALEN

Gentle of speech she answered me :—

“ Sir, I was sick with revelry.

True, I have scarred the night with sin,

A pale and tawdry heroine ;

But once I heard a voice that said

‘ Who lives in sin is surely dead,

But whoso turns to follow Me

Hath joy and immortality.’ ”

“ O Mary, not for this,” I cried,

“ Didst thou renounce thy scented pride.

Not for a prize of endless years,

Or barren joy apart from tears

Didst thou desert the courts of men.

Tell me thy truth, sweet Magdalen ! ”

She trembled, and her eyes grew dim :—

“ For love of Him, for love of Him.”

## XVII

I ROSE from dreamless hours and sought the  
morn

That beat upon my window : from the sill  
I watched sweet lands where Autumn light new-  
born

Swayed through the trees and lingered on the  
hill.

If things so lovely are, why labour still  
To dream of something more than this I see ?  
Do I remember tales of Galilee,  
I who have slain my faith and freed my will ?  
Let me forget dead faith, dead mystery,  
Dead thoughts of things I cannot comprehend.  
Enough the light mysterious in the tree,  
Enough the faithful friendship of my friend.

XVIII  
The Bridge of Fire

I

PAST the bright door of Heaven whose golden  
bars  
Exclude the interchange of Night and Day,  
Crowned with soft light, attired with shining  
stars,  
Dwell the great Gods in durable array.  
In all that land no frost, no fever mars  
Their timeless periods of pomp and play :  
Some drive about the Rim in painted cars,  
And others drink eternity away.  
The trumpet of their pride  
Proclaims them glorified  
In chronicles of unremembered sway ;  
And lady Goddesses  
Surround with sweet caress  
Their ivied paramours. " O rest ! " they say :  
" Here at our gentle bosoms lie,  
And watch the sun and moon and world and  
years roll by ! "

## THE BRIDGE OF FIRE

### II

Hear now the song of those bright shapes  
that shine  
Huge as Leviathans, tasting the fare  
Delicate-sweet, while scented dew's divine  
Thrill from the ground and clasp the rosy air.—  
“Sing on, sing out, and reach a hand for wine!  
For the drunken Earth spins softly afloat  
down there,  
And the stars burn low, and the sky is  
sapphirine,  
And the little winds of Space are in our hair!  
The little winds of Space  
Blow in the Love-god's face,  
The only God that lacks not praise and prayer;  
Who sole preserves his power  
While dynasties devour  
Temples and shrines and stones without repair.  
Still he goes forth as strong as ten,  
A red immortal riding in the hearts of men!”

## THE BRIDGE OF FIRE

### III

The Gods whose names are sunrise and delight  
For him who loves the leafy ways of song,—  
The Gods of Hellas have escaped the night  
To walk above the stars, a royal throng,—  
Zeus and Poseidon and the Boy most bright,  
The twain to whom the sceptred shades belong,  
Majestical Princesses famed in fight,  
And Aphrodite sweet to charm the strong :  
    And younger Gods than these  
    That peep among the trees,  
And dance when Dionysus beats his gong :  
    And old disastrous Gods  
    That nod with snaky nods,—  
Allecto swift to strike with dripping throng :  
    Itself the dull profound of Hell  
Spits reeling Typhon forth that in the dark did  
    dwell.

## THE BRIDGE OF FIRE

### IV

Shadows there are that seem to look for home,  
Each one a gloom upon the stellar plain,  
Voiced like a great bell swinging in a dome,  
Appealing mightily for realms to reign.  
One said—"These are the shapeless Gods of  
Rome,  
The tired-out Gods of labour, sweat and pain :  
These watched the peasant turn his sullen  
loam,  
These dragged him forth to fight and strive  
again,—  
Saturnus white and old,  
Who lost the age of gold,  
Mars and Minerva standing on the slain,  
Pomona from whose womb  
The fruits in season come,  
And she who gathers in the mellow grain,  
And ghouls of the revengeful dead,  
Larvae and Lemures that clamour to be fed."

## THE BRIDGE OF FIRE

### v

Belus and Ra and that most jealous Lord  
Who rolled the hosts of Pharaoh in the sea,  
Giants and Trolls, in every hand a sword,  
Gnomes and Dwarfs and the Spectral Company,  
Gods that take vengeance, Gods that grant  
    reward,  
Gods that exact a murdered devotee,  
Buddha the Wise, and Siva the Abhorred,  
And Norns that tend Ygdrasil, fatal tree,  
    And Isis of the Moon  
    Who kept the stars in tune,  
With her mad Phrygian sister, Cybele,  
    And Mithras swift to save  
    The faithful and the brave,  
And Allah rumbling on to victory,—  
    Behold! and oldest of them all,  
Square heads that leer and lust, and lizard  
    shapes that crawl.

## THE BRIDGE OF FIRE

### VI

The astral light grows dim upon the dales,  
As he who loved the sinner and the child,  
Before whose beauty still the tyrant quails  
Comes by alone, a quiet man and mild.  
The voice of all reproach is fixed and fails ;  
The heart is willing to be reconciled.  
Was it his work, the groaning in the jails ?  
When bodies writhed and wept, could he have  
smiled ?

Be strong, undaunted soul,  
To break the aureole:  
Release our chain, but leave him unreviled.  
Though sweet the lily blows  
The fire upon the rose  
Alone shall guide thee on the bitter wild,  
At last to find no Lotus land,  
But one where Truth may touch thee dying  
with sweet hand.

## THE BRIDGE OF FIRE

### VII

Between the pedestals of Night and Morning,  
Between red Death and radiant Desire,  
With clamour of delight and doubt and warning  
The High Gods stand upon the Bridge of Fire.  
O Soul, lay down thy pride, and cease adorning  
Thy brows with laurel or with gold thy lyre !  
The wheels of Time are turning, turning,  
turning ;  
The slow Stream waits for thee, the stagnant  
Mire.

The Dreamer and his Dream  
Shall struggle in the Stream  
Sunless and unredeemable for ever,  
Since this the Gods command,  
That he who leaves their land  
Shall travel down to that relentless River.

“ O Master of the World,” I cry,  
“ Save me from fear of Death : I dare not die.”

## XIX

### Narcissus

O THOU with whom I dallied  
Through all the hours of noon,—  
Sweet water-boy, more pallid  
Than any watery moon ;  
Above thy body turning  
White lily-buds were strewn :  
Alas, the silver morning,  
Alas, the golden noon !  
Alas, the clouds of sorrow,  
The waters of despair !  
I sought thee on the morrow,  
And never found thee there.  
Since first I saw thee splendid,  
Since last I called thee fair,  
My happy ways have ended  
By waters of despair.  
The pool that was thy dwelling  
I hardly knew again,  
So black it was, and swelling  
With bitter wind and rain.

## NARCISSUS

Amid the reeds I lingered  
Between desire and pain  
Till evening, rosy-fingered,  
Beckoned to night again.

Yet once when sudden quiet  
Had visited the skies,  
And stilled the stormy riot,  
I looked upon thine eyes.  
I saw they wept and trembled  
With glittering mysteries,  
But yellow clouds assembled  
Redarkening the skies.

O listless thou art lying  
In waters cool and sweet,  
While I, dumb brother, dying,  
Faint in the desert heat.  
Though thou dost love another,  
Still let my lips entreat :  
Men call me fair, O brother,  
And women honey-sweet.

## XX

### The Golden Head

HAD I the power  
    To Midas given of old  
To touch a flower,  
    And leave the petals gold,  
I then might touch thy face,  
    Delightful Maid,  
And leave a metal grace,  
    A graven head.

Thus would I slay—  
    Ah, desperate device!  
The vital day  
    That trembles in thine eyes,  
And let the red lips close  
    That sang so well,  
And drive away the rose,  
    To leave a shell.

## THE GOLDEN HEAD

Then I myself,  
Rising austere and dumb,  
On the high shelf  
Of my half-lighted room  
Would place the shining bust,  
And wait alone,  
Until I was but dust,  
Buried unknown.

Thus, in my love  
For nations yet unborn,  
I would remove  
From our two lives the morn,  
And muse on old speeches  
In mine armchair,  
Content, should Time confess  
How sweet you were.

## XXI

### Litany to Satan

(From Baudelaire.)

O GRANDEST of the Angels, and most wise,  
O fallen God, fate-driven from the skies,  
Satan, at last take pity on our pain !

O first of exiles who endurest wrong,  
Who growest in thy hatred still more strong  
Satan, at last take pity on our pain !

O subterranean King, omniscient,  
Healer of Man's immortal discontent !  
Satan, at last take pity on our pain !

To lepers and to outcasts thou dost show  
How passion makes Man's Paradise below.  
Satan, at last take pity on our pain !

## LITANY TO SATAN

Thou by thy Mistress Death hast given to man  
Hope, the imperishable courtesan.  
Satan, at last take pity on our pain !

Thou givest to the Guilty their calm mien  
That damns the crowd around the guillotine.  
Satan, at last take pity on our pain !

Thou knowest those corners of the jealous Earth  
Where God has hidden jewels of great worth.  
Satan, at last take pity on our pain !

Thou dost discover by mysterious signs  
Where sleep the buried people of the mines.  
Satan, at last take pity on our pain !

Thou stretchest forth a saving hand to keep  
Such men as roam upon the roofs in sleep.  
Satan, at last take pity on our pain !

Thy power can make the halting Drunkards'  
feet  
Avoid the peril of the surging street.  
Satan, at last take pity on our pain !

## LITANY TO SATAN

Thou to console our helplessness, didst plot  
The cunning use of powder and of shot.  
Satan, at last take pity on our pain !

Thy awful name is written as with pitch  
On the unrelenting foreheads of the rich :  
Satan, at last take pity on our pain !

In strange and hidden places thou dost move  
Where passions welter in unhallowed love.  
Satan, at last take pity on our pain !

Father of those whom God's tempestuous ire  
Has flung from Paradise with sword and fire,  
Satan, at last take pity on our pain !

## PRAYER

Satan, to thee be praise upon the height  
Where thou wast King of old, and in the night  
Of Hell, where thou dost dream on silently.  
Grant that one day beneath the knowledge tree,  
When it bursts forth to grace thy royal brow,  
My soul may sit, that cries upon thee now.

## XXII

WHILE I translated Baudelaire  
Children were playing out in the air.  
Turning to watch, I saw the light  
That made their clothes and faces bright.  
I heard the tune they tried to sing,  
As they kept dancing in a ring ;  
But I could not forget my book,  
And thought of men whose faces shook  
When babies passed them with a look.

They are as terrible as death,  
Those children in the road beneath.  
Their witless chatter is more dread  
Than voices in a madman's head :  
Their dance more awful and inspired,  
Because they are not ever tired,  
Than silent revel with soft sound  
Of pipes, on consecrated ground,  
When all the ghosts go round and round.

## XXIII

### Prayer

LET me not know how sins and sorrows glide  
Along the sober city of our rage,  
Or why the sons of men are heavy-eyed.

Let me not know, except from printed page,  
The pain of bitter Love, of baffled Pride,  
Or Sickness shadowing with a long presage.

Let me not know, since happy some have died  
Quickly in youth or quietly in age  
How faint, how loud, the bravest hearts have cried.

## XXIV

### Tenebris Interlucentem,

ONCE a poor songbird that had lost her way  
Sang down in Hell upon a blackened bough,  
Till all the lazy ghosts remembered how  
The forest trees stood up against the day.

Then suddenly they knew that they had died,  
Hearing this music mock their shadow land:  
And some one there stole forth a timid hand  
To draw a phantom brother to his side.

## XXV

### Anapaests

SONGS rolling a harmony deeper  
Than waves on a boreal shore,  
Than reboant winds upon seas,—  
Battle-harmonies, rousing the sleeper  
To war, from the dreaming of war,—  
I weary of songs such as these.

Physicians that need not a physic,  
Star-voices atune with the morn,  
The poet upstanding and strong,  
Make drunk with celestial music,  
Drive mad with their musical scorn,  
The men who go bitterly wrong.

## ANAPAESTS

I hate the bright streams of perfection,  
The words that are golden and wise,  
Triumphantly noble in pain ;  
The Spirits in fierce insurrection,  
But calm as the tent of the skies,—  
I hate, for I cannot attain.

Songs breathed to the tremulous ditties  
Of broken and harsh violins,  
Songs hinting the rose and the vine,  
Half drowned in the roar of red cities,  
And youthfully pleased at their sins,  
These songs I adore : they are mine.

XXVI

Destroyer of Ships, Men, Cities

To I. D.

HELEN of Troy has sprung from Hell  
To claim her ancient throne:  
So we have bidden friends farewell  
To follow her alone.

The Lady of the laurelled brow,  
The Queen of pride and power,  
Looks rather like a spirit now,  
And rather like a flower.

Dark in her eyes the lamp of night  
Burns with a secret flame,  
Where shadows pass that have no sight,  
And ghosts that have no name.

## DESTROYER OF SHIPS, MEN, CITIES

For mute is battle's brazen horn  
That rang for Priest and King ;  
And she who drank of that brave morn  
Is pale with evening.

An hour there is when bright words flow,  
A little hour for sleep,  
An hour between, when lights are low,  
And then she seems to weep.

But no less lovely than of old  
She shines, and almost hears  
The horns that blew in days of gold,  
The shouting charioteers.

And still she breaks the hearts of men,  
Their hearts, and all their pride,  
Doomed to be cruel once again,  
And live dissatisfied.

## XXVII

### My Friend

I HAD a friend who battled for the Truth,  
With stubborn heart and obstinate despair,  
Till all his beauty left him, and his youth,  
And there were few that loved him anywhere.

Then would he wander out among the graves,  
And dream of dead men lying in a row ;  
Or, standing on a cliff, observe the waves,  
And hear the wistful sound of winds below ;

And yet they told him nothing. So he sought  
The twittering forest at the break of day,  
Or on fantastic mountains shaped a thought  
As lofty and impenitent as they.

## MY FRIEND

And next he walked in wonder through the  
town,  
Slowly by day and hurriedly by night,  
To watch the puppets dangling up and down  
With timorous and terrible delight.

Weary, he drew man's wisdom from a book,  
And pondered on the high words spoken of old,  
Pacing a lamplit room ; but soon forsook  
The golden sentences that left him cold.

After, a maiden found him, and his head  
Lay on her breast, till he forgot his pain  
In gentle kisses on a midnight bed,  
And welcomed royal-winged Joy again.

When love became a loathing, as it must,  
He knew not where to turn ; and he was wise,  
Being full of years, to mix himself with dust,  
To rest his rebel soul, and close his eyes.

## XXVIII

### Oxford Canal

WHEN you have wearied of the valiant spires of  
this County Town,  
Of its wide white streets and glistening  
museums,  
Of its red motors and lumbering trams and self-  
sufficient people,  
I will take you walking with me to a place you  
have not yet seen—  
Half town and half country—the lonely land of  
the Canal.  
It is dearer to me than the antique town: I love  
it more than the rounded hills :  
There is no river so straight or so unearthly as  
the long Canal.  
No gloomy forest, no mysterious glen is so full  
of fear as that long line of sickly willows :  
In forests and glens you may find unpleasant  
beasts and irregular demons,

## OXFORD CANAL

But all through the autumn nights the souls of  
the lost pass through the willow-trees.  
I have observed great storms and trembled : I  
have wept in the dark for fear,  
But nothing makes me so afraid as the clear  
water of that empty Canal at noon.  
Do you see the great telegraph poles down in  
the water—how every wire is distinct ?  
If a body fell into the Canal it would rest en-  
tangled in those wires for ever, between  
earth and heaven :  
For the water is as deep as the sky itself.  
One day I was foolishly wondering how if a man  
fell off that lofty pole,  
He would rush through the water towards me  
till the images were scattered by his splash,  
When suddenly a train rushed by : the brazen  
dome of the engine flashed : the long white  
carriages roared ;  
The sun veiled himself for a moment, and the  
signals loomed in fog ;

## OXFORD CANAL

A savage woman screamed at me from a barge :  
    little children began to cry ;  
The untidy, unfinished land began to move : a  
    saw-mill started ;  
A cart rattled down to the wharf, and workmen  
    clanged over the iron foot-bridge ;  
A beautiful old man nodded from the first-story  
    window of a square red house,  
And a pretty girl came out to hang up clothes in  
    a small delightful garden.  
O strange motion in the suburb of a County  
    Town : slow, regular movement of the  
    dance of death !  
No phantoms move in the light : more terrible  
    than phantoms, they are men.  
Theirs is no romance of great cities, or stupen-  
    dous crimes ; nor do they live on wild poetic  
    moors.  
Forgotten they live, and forgotten die.

## XXIX

### The Old Poet

Now fails the fire : my heart is numb with  
pain :

I am reminded in too many ways  
Of voices I shall never hear again,  
Of happier days.

O not another poem will I write :  
I will forget the books that I have read :  
I will step out reluctant through the night,  
Veiling my head.

For grief like mine no tragic peals of woe  
Thunder : I am too cursed with abject fear  
To stand in daylight. Of my poems know  
This one sincere.

### XXX

## The Young Poet

If there be any grief  
For those lost eremites  
That live in lonely tombs,  
It is on Autumn nights,  
At falling of the leaf ;  
It is when pale October,  
Relentless tree-disrober,  
Invades the silent homes.

But him no Autumn's chill  
Shall have the power to harm :  
Predominant, his lyre  
Shall keep remembrance warm  
And leave him lovely still :  
And spirits softly winging  
Shall listen to his singing,  
And weep for his desire.

## THE YOUNG POET

He loved and sang and sinned  
With roses on his brow.  
Alas for all his pride!  
His eyes are eaten now,  
He's lighter than the wind.  
The veil of Love is riven,  
The Sin by Death forgiven,  
The Singer glorified.

Autumn has killed the rose :  
O mock him not with flowers :  
Set up no shapely stone !  
Take him to pass the hours  
Where the grey nettle grows.  
With scant and scarce adorning  
Let him who praised the morning  
Lie here, alone, unknown !

## XXXI

### The First Sonnet of Bathrolaire

OVER the moonless land of Bathrolaire  
Rises at night, when revelry begins,  
A white unreal orb, a Sun that spins,  
And watches with a faint metallic stare  
The madly moving dance that they dance there,  
Whilst din and drone of ghostly violins  
Drown the triumphant shriek of obscene sins,  
And raise the incantation of despair.  
And all the spaces of that midnight Town  
Sound with appeal and sorrowful abuse.  
There some most lonely are : some try to crown  
Mad lovers with sad boughs of formal yews,  
And Titan women wandering up and down  
Lead on the pale fanatics of the Muse.

## XXXII

### The Second Sonnet of Bathrolaire

Now the sweet Dawn on brighter fields afar  
Has walked among the daisies, or has breathed  
The glory of the mountain winds, and sheathed  
The stubborn sword of Night's last-shining star.  
In Bathrolaire, when Day's old doors unbar  
The motley mask, fantastically wreathed  
Pass through a strong portcullis, brazen-teethed,  
And enter glowing mines of cinnabar.  
Stupendous prisons shut them out from day,  
Gratings and caves and rayless catacombs,  
And the unrelenting rack and tourniquet  
Grind death in cells where jetting gaslight  
    gloams,  
And iron ladders stretching far away  
Dive to the depths of those eternal Domes.

XXXIII  
 I AM afraid to think about my death,  
 When it shall be, and whether in  
 I shall rise up and battle for my breath  
 Or calmly wait the bursting of my brain.  
 I am no coward who should seek in  
 A folklore solace or sweet Indian  
 I know dead men are deaf and cannot hear  
 The singing of a thousand nightingales.  
 I know dead men are blind, and cannot see  
 The friend that shuts in horror their big eyes,  
 And they are witless—Oh, I'd rather be  
 A living mouse than dead in such a wise.

## XXXIV

### Envoy

THE **y**oung men leap, and toss their golden hair,  
Run **r**ound the land, or sail across the seas :  
But **o**ne was stricken with a sore disease,—  
The **l**ean and swarthy poet of despair.  
Know me, the slave of fear and death and  
    shame,  
A sad **C**omedian, a most tragic Fool,  
Shallow, imperfect, fashioned without rule,  
The **d**oubtful shadow of a demon flame.

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